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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

24 February 1959

DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Iran-USSR: The Shah is enraged by the strong public attack made on him by Khrushchev on 17 February. Iranian Prime Minister Eqbal believes that the Soviet Union's tough propaganda campaign against the Shah may have considerable internal repercussions and has again asked for American support and guarantees. 25X1

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UAR-USSR: Nasir's 21 February speech in Cairo concerned largely domestic and Arab affairs, but it also reflected his preoccupation with Soviet relations. The recent letters exchanged between Nasir and Khrushchev show that both are directly interested in containing their differences and consequently are likely to make further appropriate gestures in that direction. However, their divergent policies, including those toward Iraq, are likely to continue creating problems in their relationship.

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Ceylon: [The one-day general strike planned for 23 February has been postponed, possibly until 3 March. Tension remains high, however, and powerful plantation labor unions are reported willing to join Colombo's urban workers when they strike.] [redacted]

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Somalia: Violence is anticipated during elections for a legislative assembly in the Italian trust territory of Somalia from 4 through 8 March. The 90-member assembly selected will draft the constitution and make other preparations for independence in 1960. The opposition party, boycotting the election in protest against questionable electoral methods employed by the Somali Youth League--the ruling party--may engage in violence, including attacks on foreigners and destruction of foreign installations. Police are aware of the threat and are taking emergency measures. [redacted]

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Morocco: [Abdelkhalek Torres, an important nationalist leader and Moroccan ambassador to Cairo, intends to resign and return to active politics. Torres' decision probably has the approval of the King, who may look on him as a conservative and as an acceptable future premier. Premier Ibrahim had]

25X1

24 Feb 59

DAILY BRIEF

ii

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wanted Torres to remain in Cairo, but was presumably over-ruled by the King. An adherent of the Istiqlal party's right wing, which is still struggling with the left wing for party control, Torres will try to strengthen the right wing's following in northern Morocco. If he fails, he may try to reconstitute the Islah, his former party, which had a wide following in the North.

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24 Feb 59

DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA=AFRICA

Iranian-Soviet Relations Becoming Increasingly Strained

(The Iranian Government, while maintaining a tough public posture, is becoming worried over possible domestic and foreign repercussions from the sharp and continuing Soviet propaganda attack since the Soviet-Iranian discussions ended in anger on 10 February. Prime Minister Eqbal is appealing for strong public assurances from London and Washington. He has asked for statements to the effect that Iran's security and integrity are of primary importance and that Soviet aggression against Iran would not be tolerated. Eqbal believes such support of the regime would bolster Iranian morale and discourage antigovernment activity. He also suggests that foreign praise of Iran's evolutionary social and economic progress and potential would be beneficial.)

(Eqbal's concern over the worsening situation is further emphasized by his claim that Soviet Ambassador Pegov is spreading the warning around Tehran--among both Iranians and the diplomatic corps--that if Iran signs the proposed bilateral agreement with the United States, the Soviet Union will occupy Azerbaijan in northwest Iran. At a UAR Embassy reception on 22 February, however, Pegov denied that he had made such a statement. Eqbal says he regards Pegov's threat as "purely bluff" but fears such propaganda will arouse fear and concern among the Iranian people. Eqbal also maintains that Moscow has established a special agent training school near the western Soviet-Iranian border for purposes of stirring up activity against the Shah.)

(The Shah, who is enraged over Khrushchev's recent tough personal attacks against him and his family, is threatening to break diplomatic relations with the USSR unless a public apology is forthcoming. Ambassador Wailes believes it is very unlikely, however, that the Shah will actually go to this extreme.)

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Nasir's Anniversary Speech in Cairo

Nasir's Cairo speech commemorating the first anniversary of the union between Syria and Egypt emphasized his great concern with the unsettled conditions in Syria. He extolled the benefits and achievements of the regime in Syria since the union--land distribution, development projects, increased education opportunities, and exploitation of natural resources. Continual reference was made to Arab nationalism's mission to bring about "social revolution"--including both political and social democracy.

However, Nasir gave no hope to those who desire the rebirth of political parties, which he described as vestiges and tools of the former "imperialist" rule in the Arab states. As a sop to politically conscious Syrians, Nasir said a National Union would be organized immediately in Syria along the lines of its monolithic counterpart in Egypt. He promised elections in the near future to choose members for the executive committees of the Syrian and Egyptian National Unions; the committees will have the task of organizing the "social revolution."

Nasir also made his usual review of the Arab and international situations. The Baghdad Pact received a standard blast. Israel was treated in the context of increased Jewish emigration from the Soviet bloc--a "threat" he dismissed by quoting Izvestia's denunciation of Western reports that the USSR might permit some of its 3,000,000 Jews to leave for Israel.

Nasir referred to the ticklish problem of UAR-Soviet relations by mentioning Khrushchev's reaffirmation of Soviet support for the UAR in his reply of 20 February to a letter from Nasir. This and the Izvestia article reflected the Soviet leader's desire to prevent "ideological" differences from undermining governmental relations. Khrushchev's letter, which said Cairo's attitude toward Communism is solely an internal UAR matter, and the Izvestia article on Jewish emigration probably were timed to influence Nasir's speeches during the UAR anniversary celebrations. These conciliatory gestures may also have been timed to counter any possible adverse effects on Soviet-UAR relations of President Tito's visit to Cairo and Damascus.

Despite the Soviet assurances and Nasir's conciliatory reference to Iraq, it is doubtful that the struggle between the UAR and the Soviet Union for control in Iraq will be affected.

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Rioting May Occur During March Legislative
Elections in Somalia

Police officials in the Italian trust territory of Somalia fear that violence, including attacks on American and European interests, may erupt in connection with legislative elections from 4 to 8 March. Rumors alleging that the pro-Egyptian, opposition Greater Somalia League (GSL) plans to attack Italian, American, and Ethiopian personnel and facilities appear to be an exaggeration. However, party president Hagi Mohammed Hussein admitted to police that hotheads might resort to violence, but he denied that a recent party congress resolved to use every means, including bloodshed, to ensure success of its election boycott.

The circumstances surrounding these important elections suggest that both the opposition and the ruling Somali Youth League (SYL) may resort to sporadic terrorism. The March elections will determine which party will write Somalia's constitution, select its form of government, and guide the new state after its scheduled independence in December 1960. The Somali Youth League, presently of pro-Western orientation, has already used its control of the police and administration to hamper the opposition's registration and to jail several of its leaders.

The expected lopsided Youth League majority--already assured of at least 55 of the 90 seats--may itself cause the party grave difficulties. A lack of legislative opposition will favor the re-emergence of bitter tribal animosity within the governing coalition and probably be reflected in the police and administrative staffs. Furthermore, the questionable election methods employed by the SYL will furnish opposition groups and their UAR sponsor excellent propaganda material. Such charges of corruption could play a significant role in 1960 when the United Nations will discuss the procedure for termination of the trusteeship preparatory to complete independence.

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Moroccan Leader Returns to Re-enter Politics

{Abdelkhalek Torres, leader of the nationalist Islah party which merged with the ruling Istiqlal party in 1956, intends to resign as Moroccan ambassador to Cairo and return to active politics. Ostensibly an Istiqlal neutral but publicly siding with Allal el-Fassi in the latter's struggle with left-wing dissidents for control of the party, Torres plans to rebuild his personal following in northern Morocco, where anti-Istiqlal tribal disorders have occurred during the past five months. He also intends to enlarge his following in other areas. He claims that in the as-yet-unscheduled municipal elections he is certain of at least 25 percent of all municipal assembly seats.}

{Torres' return to politics, opposed by left-wing Istiqlal Premier Ibrahim, apparently has the approval of King Mohamed V, who is concerned about instability in northern Morocco. }

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{The King, who has resisted past Istiqlal attempts to install a one-party political system, seems to favor a two-party rather than a multi-party system and for that reason may not have sanctioned at this time the desire of many Torres followers to break away from Istiqlal.}

{The King apparently discussed with Torres during an audience on 11 February the possibility of succeeding Premier Ibrahim, whose cabinet was installed in December as a stop-gap measure and was specifically charged with holding early municipal elections. American Ambassador Yost believes Torres is generally friendly to the West and would make a satisfactory premier. If invested as premier, Torres probably would follow the policy of his predecessors and demand the evacuation of foreign troops, including the American bases.}

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